



# ELSAH HISTORY

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## BOB LOWDER REMEMBERED



*Bob, remembered by Pat Lowder Fite: [Pat is Bob's niece, now living in Bunker Hill, IL.]*

After moving to Alton at the age of 10, my weekends and summers were spent at Uncle Bob and Aunt Flora [Lowder]'s house in Elsie [at 107 Mill Street]. My Grandparents Harry and Daisy were living in the house across the street, where we had lived [108 Mill].

Aunt Flora was always baking and cooking. She worked for several families in the village and for Principia College and catered wedding receptions, which I helped her at. Uncle Bob was active in Boy Scouts for 50 years, also with the Fire Department, and worked as a bus driver transporting school children to the Principia St. Louis campus.

Elsie at this time was a quiet village, not much traffic. One could play in the streets. As a small child I took the Dinky to Alton for shopping and bus to St. Louis. It's now the River Road. I would go fishing with Uncle Bob and cross the tracks to get to the riverbank. Uncle Bob loved to walk the woods behind their house. Many times I was with him, learning the different birds and animal tracks. He taught me to drive his truck, which was a stick shift, and we would go jumping down the street. He was a very patient man indeed!

Aunt Flora attempted to teach me her cooking and baking skills, which (today I'm sorry to say) was not of great interest to me. I was a tomboy and preferred being outside with Uncle Bob. I would go to Camp Warren Levis with him when he was active in Scouts, as did my children in later years. They also spent time in the summer at their house.

Aunt Flora and Uncle Bob would go with us camping on weekends after I married, and Uncle Bob and my husband would go hunting and fishing.

Uncle Bob lived with us in our home the last year of his life. The cycle complete: As he took care of me in my young life, I took care of him in his later life. And for this I'm very thankful.

*Bob, remembered by Leo Prather: [Leo is the son of the owners of the Prather Store, formerly on LaSalle Street.]*

I remember Bob as head of the Boy Scouts, probably in 1952. He was always a quiet and calm person. I don't remember him even raising his voice—even when some of us probably deserved a stern word. At Scout meetings in their home Flora made the "best" hot chocolate.



Bob was a civic minded, kind and great person. He was a positive influence on many young minds that were Boy Scouts and they followed his leadership. Even as a young man (a kid) I considered Bob as a friend.

*Bob, remembered by June Cronin: [June is a long-time resident of Elsah.]*

Elsah lost one of her own when Bob Lowder passed away this past winter. He was born in Elsah, in his family home near Mill Street and Cemetery Road, the eldest of three sons born to Daisy and Harry Lowder. His wife, Flora, passed away several years ago.

As scoutmaster for Boy Scout Troop 9, he encouraged many young men to be all that they could be. During his forty-some years in scouting, many of his scouts attained the distinguished rank of Eagle Scout.

Bob Lowder's niece discovered some newspaper clippings when she was emptying his house, and she has shared them with HEF. Two articles speak of "the big snow of Jan. 31, 1958," when 17 children from Principia's Lower School and 7 teachers were snowbound near Lindbergh and Page in St. Louis, on their bus ride home to Elsah. It had taken them 6 hours to go 10 miles. They were all cared for in local homes that night, and "it was a big lark for everybody but the bus driver [Bob], who spent the night in the bus."

A Principia Pilot article told of Bob's recognition for safe operation of the Prin bus. For two consecutive years he received a certificate of merit and a pin from the American Automobile Insurance Company for his safe driving.

Bob was a friend and protector of wildlife. He built and maintained many bluebird houses, some of which remain on the fence around Elsah Cemetery, as well as several in and around the yard of his home. He always knew where the wild turkeys roosted, and where the deer crossed from one hill to the other.

He had a vivid memory of his boyhood in Elsah and loved to tell of his adventures in the "old days" [See *Elsah History No.55 (1989) & No.59 (1990)* for his stories of growing up in Elsah.] Bob will long be remembered with fondness by all of his Elsah friends.

And a Principia publication probably from the late 1970s noted several people who were honored for working at Prin for 20 years or more. The comment about Bob was: "After 33 years, Bob Lowder has driven that bus well over half a million miles and probably knows more about the Elsah families than anyone else does. Bob also works in the St. Louis School Store and, in the summers, for Elsah Landscape."

A final clipping announced that Bob had received a Scout Statuette Award, "the highest award for a Scouter," for his outstanding leadership in the Piasa Bird Council.

Thank you, Pat Fite, for sharing these with us!



The picture of Bob Lowder on the front page was taken from this photo, which appeared in the Jerseyville DEMOCRAT NEWS, July 17, 1978. Shown are Troop 9 members at Camp Warren Levis in Godfrey. Front row, left to right: Fred Cronin, Tom Cronin, Evan Williams; back: Steve Talcott and Scoutmaster Lowder.



Courtesy of Pat Fite

## HEF HOUSE TOUR

Many of Principia's Summer Sessioners enjoyed a house tour on Saturday, July 21, from 10 am to 12 noon. The tour was in a concentrated area along Mill Street, from the 4-way stop at Mill and Maple streets, north to Fountain Square Park. The Evans house was supposed to be open, with a realtor showing it; but two days before the tour, it sold and the new owners chose not to have it open. The Haslams (at #47 Mill) were willing on short notice to open their home and garden. The other places that were open were: Farley's (#37, for a cool drink, restrooms, and HEF literature), the Civic Center (#51, the upstairs room, which now houses the Village offices, and where the new mayor Marge Doerr greeted visitors), Norm Brokaw's home (#54), Sara & Bob Rockabrand's (#56), Gil Ives' (#59), and Jeri & Ed Lewitz' (#66). Following the tour, all those who helped were treated to a home-cooked luncheon by Jeri at Farley's.

## RECEPTION FOR JANE PFEIFER



HEF collaborated with the Village to honor outgoing Mayor Jane Pfeifer on Sunday, April 8, in Farley's Music Hall. Jane's family and friends and several dignitaries (either in person or by letter) expressed sincere appreciation to her for her dedicated work for the village for over 20 years. The reception was from 3-5 pm; however, almost everyone came early and stayed for the entire time! Many friends contributed to the gifts for Jane: a bench (which now rests in front of the Village Hall/Museum), a memory book, and two Danish dinner plates. Her family presented Jane with an original painting by Cynthia Nartonis. Linda Elliot furnished lovely harp music. Many of the guests are shown here surrounding Jane with love.



Pictures  
by  
Ing-  
Mack

## THE ELSAH TUNNEL



*There was one written response to the request for reminiscences of visiting the Elsayh tunnel. It came from Kathryn Thompson, now a resident of Alton.*

"I remember Paul Williams' accounts of wearing waders and pushing a boat all the way to the back of the tunnel to measure it. Dad [Charles Hosmer] took me to see the entrance, and I remember crouching and waddling in as a little girl. By high school (1980-1984), Lorrie Wyble and I planned to explore it but found we had to slither in on our tummies—our backs scraped the sharp rock roof—until we were inside and the mud sloped down to the water until we could stand.

"My Freshman year at Prin College, I led an expedition of Elaine Follis' "Wisdom of Israel" students (including Elaine in elegant pumps) to the entrance where we pretended to find the Dead Sea Scrolls, followed by a celebration of immortality in the Elsayh Cemetery. There really wasn't room even to slide in,

but we crouched and shouted into the crack to hear the echo.

"By Sophomore year (1986) I convinced able-bodied Jeremy Crandell to help me dig in with shovels to explore the tunnel, but I ended up watching him sling mud until we both gave up. We did notice the variety of appliances that had been dumped at the entrance over the years.

"I haven't been back since, because my gut tells me the whole arched entry is hidden, but I haven't forgotten it's there. I remember my Cold War plan as a girl to hide there if Russia bombed us. I guess I'd better line up a Bobcat if I really want to try that means of survival." 😊

## MUSICALE BY "THE SPRING DUO"



Lindsay Garritson, pianist

On Sunday, April 22, 2001, HEF sponsored a free concert for members and friends in Farley's by Lindsay Garritson and Erin Schreiber, "The Spring Duo."

It was an elegant affair on a beautiful spring afternoon. The full audience was utterly charmed by these talented young women, whom we will certainly see a lot of in the coming years. Lindsay and Erin are shown receiving a well-deserved tribute.



Erin Schreiber, violinist

Pictures by Mary Anne Schmidt

### UPCOMING ACTIVITIES - Mark your calendar.

- **November 3rd, Saturday**—A 4-hour public workshop (sponsored jointly with HEF and the Village) to educate about historic zoning. State officials and local organizations will be invited.
- **November 16th, Friday**—HEF semi-annual membership meeting
- **December 1st, Saturday**—House tour, sponsored by Business Association.
- **December 16th, Sunday**—Christmas Sing at the two churches.



### WELCOME

to Midge & Kim Browning and their son—at 122B Cemetery Road in the duplex  
to Cindy & Steve Ira—at 19 LaSalle  
to Olivia & John Mitchell—at 11 Valley  
to John Reed—at 18 Mill

to the Vander Mark family: Judy & Bert (new Life Members of HEF) and their children—at 18 Palm St.  
to Whitney & Todd Wedding—at 10 Valley  
to Ashley Woefel & Matt Dwiggin—way up on Penn  
and to new homeowners Gail & David Haslam—at 47 Mill

### and FAREWELL

to Julia Biesk, Sue Collester, Patti & Gary Fry, Jim Dowcett, Mary Paine, Michelle & Arnie Schmith, Linda Sleight & Ben (They still live nearby.), Judy & Dave Spencer—all of whom will be missed as village residents

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